



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

AOT's **2014 Arizona Official State Visitor's Guides and Maps** are now available for distribution! All the details are below in the news section below. DMOs and local visitor information centers (LVICs) interested in ordering the new guides can contact Loretta Belonio, Fulfillment Manager, at 602-364-3725 or via email at lbelonio@azot.gov.

In other AOT news, we had the opportunity to participate in the Border Communities Roadmap project. The Roadmap is a collaborative agency effort between the Arizona-Mexico Commission, Arizona Department of Transportation, AOT and Arizona Commerce Authority. The project's mission is to identify, prioritize, and advance policy and strategic action resulting in a roadmap for developing a thriving Arizona border region.

As one of our state's key international visitor markets, it's important for us to identify travel opportunities that will attract Mexican visitors wanting to experience Arizona as a vacation destination. Travel spending by Mexican visitors generates billions of dollars and contributes to the creation of jobs, earnings and tax revenue, all of which leads to Arizona's economic success. Further details about the project are in the newsletter below.

Have a great week,

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Arizona's 2014 Travel Guide is now Available!

The Arizona Office of Tourism's 2014 Arizona Official State Visitor's Guide (OSVG), and accompanying Official State Visitor's Map are now available for travelers wanting more out information about Arizona as a vibrant leisure destination.

Abundant with valuable Arizona tourist information from traveling tips to statewide accommodations, the guide is fully supported by advertising dollars and was produced with no direct costs to the agency's budget. More than 450,000 copies have been published along with 500,000 accompanying comprehensive maps.

Complimentary copies of the guides and maps will be distributed in response to the agency's consumer advertising campaigns, as well as to travel industry partners and at visitor information centers located throughout the state.

This year, the 2014 guide features articles written by Arizona-based writers and includes topics such as exploring the many ways to experience Arizona's Tribal Lands; where to enjoy the state's unofficial-official cocktail – the Margarita; locations for the best bird watching in the state; how to follow in the steps of Presidential visits; and a celebration of Arizona's diverse cultures. To request a guide, visit <http://arizonaguide.com/request-a-visitors-guide>.

Arizona Border Communities Roadmap Released

Governor Janice K. Brewer, together with four state agencies and several southern Arizona border communities, announced the release of the Border Communities Roadmap.

When announcing the Roadmap's release, Governor Brewer said, "Expanding the capacity of our commercial ports of entry, strengthening our trade corridors, and developing a focused trade and transportation strategy for Arizona will foster job creation and attract new business and investment that will benefit the entire state."

The Border Communities Roadmap is an initiative of Governor Brewer that examined and developed a strategic action plan with economic development priorities and policy direction to foster economic prosperity for Arizona's border communities. The Roadmap process involved a collaborative effort between the Arizona-Mexico Commission, Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Department of Transportation, and Arizona Office of Tourism working closely with the communities of Douglas, Nogales, San Luis, Somerton, and Yuma.

As gateways, the Arizona border communities enable the flow of billions of dollars of trade and millions of cross-border travelers each year. The full report is available on AOT's website in the [Research and Statistics](#) section under Community Studies and Assessments.

New Update to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- *NEW REPORT!* [Statewide Tourism Indicators Infographic](#) – a year-to-date snapshot of the information reported on a monthly basis.
- [Gross Sales and Tourism Taxes October 2013](#)
- [National Park Visitation August 2013](#)

- [National Park Visitation September 2013](#)
- [National Park Visitation October 2013](#)
- [State Park Visitation August 2013](#)
- [Passenger Volume September 2013](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Jennifer Miller, Research Specialist, at 602-364-3702 or via e-mail at jmiller@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[China Sales and Media Mission](#)

Date: January 13 – 17, 2014

Location: Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai, PRC

[Germany Media Mission](#)

Date: January 27 – 30, 2014

Location: Hamburg, Berlin and Cologne, Germany

[Arizona Flavors: Exploring the agricultural bounty of Arizona](#)

Date: February 3 – 7, 2014

Location: Yuma, Tucson and Mesa

Industry News

USTOA Member Tour Operators Report 2013 Gains

A new survey of the U.S. Tour Operators Association indicates an optimistic, upward trend in business for tour operators, with 89 percent of the members showing increased revenues in 2013 and 92.2 percent showing an increase in passengers.

In 2012, the association set a policy of having an audit by Price Waterhouse Cooper every other year, and on the in-between years it will conduct its own internal survey. This year was the year for the internal survey.

The USTOA's board released the results of an internal survey of its active tour operator members at its Annual Conference and Marketplace at the Fairmont Princess Hotel in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The survey captures a snapshot of the cross section of the tour industry represented by USTOA's membership, comprised of 47 corporate members representing more than 150 brands.

Sixty-two percent of the members reported increases of 10 percent or more over 2012. Fifty-four percent reported that they increased staff in 2013 and 16 percent raised staff levels by 10 percent or more.

Around 57 percent said they expect business to increase again this year.

Nearly 90 percent reported that they do business with travel agents, and a quarter of members said that more than 90 percent of their business comes through travel agents. Fifty-two percent expect to see the travel agent portion of their bookings rise in 2014.

The survey asked what key motivators were behind clients' booking choices and the number one motivator for booking a tour was the destination of a tour or package. The second motivating factor was value, and the third was company reputation.

Booking windows have lengthened, according to the data, with 62 percent of bookings six-12 months in advance of departure, and 35.6 percent booking less than six months from departure date.

Two-thirds of the members saw an increase in travel of families with children 18 years of age or less. About 9 percent of the operators listed this segment of family travel as representing more than 75 percent of their business.

Tour operators named Myanmar, Vietnam/Cambodia (tied) and India as the top emerging destinations. The most popular destinations were Italy, Britain and China/Peru (tied).

With experiential travel taking center stage in the marketing of new tour products, Europe was named as the destination with the richest assortment of experiences available.

As social media continues to grow in its importance to tour operators as a marketing tool, the channels preferred by USTOA members for social media were Facebook (95.6 percent), Twitter (80 percent), YouTube (69 percent), a company blog (60 percent) and Pinterest (42 percent).

More than 60 percent said they apportion 1 to 5 percent of their marketing budgets to social media; 23 percent said they devote 10-16 percent; and 16 percent spend up to 25 percent of their marketing budgets on social media. (*Travel Pulse*, Dec. 8)

College Football Playoff Selects Arizona for 2016 Championship Game

College football's biggest game is coming back to Arizona. The College Football Playoff on Monday selected Arizona to host the 2016 College Football National Championship Game, set for Jan. 11, 2016 at Glendale's University of Phoenix Stadium. It will be the state's eighth national championship contest since 1987.

"This is a great day for Arizona," said Robert Shelton, executive director of the Fiesta Bowl. "Our communities will unite to provide an unmatched experience for all."

Arizona sports and community leaders teamed up on the proposal, which prevailed over bids by New Orleans, Tampa Bay and Jacksonville. The Arizona Host Committee includes representatives

of the Fiesta Bowl, the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority, the Arizona Cardinals, local tourism bureaus, the hospitality industry and municipalities.

"Arizona has proven itself to be one of the greatest settings for premiere college football events, and has become a favored destination for fans from around the country. The folks in Arizona put together an exceptional bid that really won the day with the management committee," said Bill Hancock, executive director of the College Football Playoff.

"We thank the College Football Playoff for choosing Arizona and recognizing the strong commitment of our public and private stakeholders," said Tom Sadler, chairman of the Arizona Host Committee and President of the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority. "We are grateful for an opportunity to host the title game and set a new standard of excellence."

Monday's announcement confirmed Arizona's status as a destination for elite sporting events and heralded the return of a key economic driver. The last four BCS national championship games played in Arizona - in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 - produced a combined economic impact of \$646.2 million, according to studies by Arizona State University. (*FiestaBowl.org*)

Mesa City Limitless Brand Unveiled in New Destination Video and National Marketing Campaign

After a six month audit polling leisure and business travel consumers from across North America and six months of brand development and positioning in response, Visit Mesa officials have unveiled a fresh Arizona experience for visitors: Mesa City Limitless.

"We are engaging in a constant dialogue with a new travel consumer and putting Mesa on their short list of vacation spots to consider this winter," said Visit Mesa President and CEO Marc Garcia. "Our region's travel attributes and products have never before been exposed on this scale. We are serving up Mesa City Limitless to many varying demographics and sets of visitors, all targeted for their high propensity to travel over the next four to five months."

The latest shout out to winter-weary travelers is in the form of a compelling destination video, Limitless, [available on YouTube](#). Produced and edited by Los Angeles-based Face Head Media directed by Stephen Snavely and the organization's brand manager Mindset Inc., the three-minute video connects Mesa's authentic travel experiences with the visitor actively seeking respite and refuge this winter in the Sonoran Desert. Visit Mesa called upon Weird is the New Cool, a local band with a rapidly growing fan base, and commissioned lead singer and Mesa native Kyle Collins to pen an original anthem about 'a city so limitless'. The video and song lyrics reflect Collins' memories and favorite experiences such as water-skiing at Saguaro Lake, hiking the Superstition Mountains, and soaking up Mesa nightlife.

The video was shot over the course of five days in September capturing a collection of visitor attractions and experiences exclusive to Mesa, along with showcasing regional offerings in Gilbert, Queen Creek and along the Apache Trail. The segues from scene to scene feature Collins calling to viewers to come to a place 'where the land is pretty and the people are, too' and the fresh, upbeat music helps carry the viewer through all of Visit Mesa's branded lifestyles targeted to visitors: arts and culture, Western heritage, agri-tourism, education, water recreation, outdoor exploration and desert renewal, dining and nightlife, hotels and shopping.

The lifestyles captured in the video are also detailed on the [VisitMesa.com website](http://VisitMesa.com) intended to assist potential visitors with finding the perfect match of experiences and begin planning their visit. Five travel types are featured online including Active Family, Adventure Explorer, Fresh Foodie, Sports Enthusiast and Culture Seeker.

The City of Mesa benefits immensely from visitor activity throughout the year. In fiscal year 2012-2013, Visit Mesa estimates that for every \$1 invested in Visit Mesa by the City of Mesa there is an estimated return of \$12.13 in future direct visitor expenditures by leisure, meeting and sports event groups booked by the organization. (*VisitMesa.com*)

What Travel Activities Users Perform on Mobile

After seeing a travel ad or a video in mobile, 74% of people would request for more information about that travel company.

This is according to a study by Tapjoy, a performance-based mobile advertising platform.

This number shouldn't surprise many as the industry is moving towards advanced techniques like desktop-to-mobile ad retargeting where more relevant content is served on mobile.

Expedia, for example, was able to retarget 54 million of its customers using this technique.

The outcome of the study was conducted in early November among 860 users in its network. Below are highlights of the study.

- After seeing a travel ad, 56% of consumers search for travel deals and promotions on their mobile device
- 35% research travel plans on their mobile device
- 16% purchase flight tickets on their mobile device
- 72% book their travel less than three months ahead
- When making last-minute arrangements, 65% prefer to use their mobile

See more at: <http://www.tnooz.com/article/mobile-travel-activities-infographic#sthash.15qRCVa2.dpuf><http://www.tnooz.com/article/mobile-travel-activities-infographic>. (*Tnooz.com, Dec. 15*)

AAA: Holiday Travel to Increase for Fifth Straight Year

If you were thinking holiday travel wouldn't be as bad this year, think again.

AAA projects 94.5 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holiday season, an increase of 0.6 percent from the 94 million people who traveled last year. It marks the fifth consecutive year of increases and the highest travel volume recorded for the season (Dec. 21 to Jan. 1).

"While economic growth has stagnated and consumer confidence has fallen Americans will not be scrooges when it comes to traveling this year," said AAA Chicago Regional President Brad Roeber. "Of all the travel holidays, the year-end holiday season remains the least volatile as Americans will not let economic conditions dictate their travel plans to celebrate the holidays."

For the entire holiday season, nearly 30 percent of Americans will take a trip, with more than 25 percent taking to the road.

Of course, with more cars comes more breakdowns. AAA projects to help 3.76 million motorists on the side of the road this holiday season, with the primary reasons being dead batteries, flat tires and lockouts.

Car rental rates have also increased by 13 percent.

The good news is that gas prices are about even with 2012 as travelers take to the roads this weekend, perhaps alleviating some of the bumper-to-bumper headache. Also, hotel rates are relatively the same as last year.

Some may want to think about flying instead of driving. Holiday air travel is expected to decline to 5.53 million people, compared to 5.61 million last year.

In addition, rates are cheaper, with the average lowest round-trip rate being \$199 for the top 40 U.S. air routes. That's down from \$204 last year.

Approximately 3.13 million travelers will choose other modes of transportation, including rail, bus and cruise ship. (*Travel Pulse, Dec. 17*)

Survey: Business Travel Expected to Increase in 2014

Business travel is expected to increase significantly in 2014, sparking growth in the travel and hospitality industries, according to a recent survey conducted by Frequent Business Traveler magazine.

This marks the second consecutive year more than one-third (35.7 percent) of business travelers surveyed said they will travel more in the coming year than the current one, while almost half (47.2 percent) said they will travel the same amount.

But with growth in business travel comes more demand for quality service. So far, hotels and airlines haven't generally inspired travelers.

Of those surveyed, 88 percent of hotel guests and 76 percent of airline passengers said their experiences were "inconsistent." Last year, 83 percent of hotel guests and 77 percent of airline passengers said the same thing.

"Business travelers are professional travelers and they need to balance this aspect of their lives with getting the job done when they get to their destination," said Jonathan Spira, Frequent Business Traveler magazine's editorial director. "The amenities and services they require are not always what hotels and airlines provide, and travel executives need to pay heed to what the business traveler is saying."

According to the survey, business travelers are generally more loyal to airlines than hotels. Nearly 75 percent said they would fly a preferred airline even if the flight wasn't as convenient, compared to 45 percent who said they would ditch more convenience for a particular hotel brand.

On the other hand, airlines and hotels both saw a drop in this category from 2012 (80 percent and 58 percent, respectively), so they need to make sure they keep passengers happy or this trend could continue.

And, unsurprisingly, the availability of Wi-Fi (or lack thereof) continues to impact loyalty. One quarter of those surveyed said the availability of Wi-Fi impacts their choice of airline and flight, while 73 percent said they seek out Wi-Fi when selecting a hotel. This is steady with last year's numbers.

The survey was conducted during the last quarter of 2013 in association with FlyerTalk and polled 1,323 frequent business travelers. You can find it online at <http://accura.cc/j43tkv>. (Travel Pulse, Dec. 18)

Kingman Visitor Center Welcomes 100,000th Guest in 2013

At precisely 4:41 pm on Thursday, December 19th the 100,000 guest walked through the doors of the Kingman Visitor Center, located in Kingman's historic Powerhouse. Mark Rubbert, who had just moved to town from North Dakota the day before, came in with his friend Donna Dunn in search of hiking and recreation information, but was greeted with an entire welcome package of gifts and information to introduce him to his new community.

"It was the highlight of my day to see Mark's face as he came through the door" says Director of Tourism Josh Noble. "You could see he didn't know what to think when we all clapped for him as his foot crossed the threshold, but it was exciting for all of us!"

Although the Visitor Center primarily hosts tourists, many come to the Visitor Center as new or potential residents, looking for recreational and quality of life information.

The Visitor Center has not hosted over 100,000 visitors in one year since 2008 when the recession started.

"We've seen a boost in traffic in 2013, especially surrounding the October partial Government shut down when people were dropping in like flies, rerouting entire vacation plans" said Noble. "In 2012 we had 95,631 visitors – we're on track for an 8% increase this year."

Minutes later, the Powerhouse Visitor Center gave a second "Just Missed It" welcome package to the next party, Don and Pat Oberman who were visiting from upstate New York.

The "100,000th Visitor" and "Just Missed It" welcome packages contained donations from the Kingman Visitor Center, Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona, Hualapai Tourist Information Center, Mohave Museum of History & Arts, Dambar & Steakhouse, KRMC and the Grand Canyon Caverns. They contained passes to the Museums, Grand Canyon Caverns, a gift card to the Dambar or Mattina's and souvenirs for Kingman, Route 66, Arizona and Grand Canyon West. The packages were valued at \$250 and \$175. (Dec. 20)

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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